

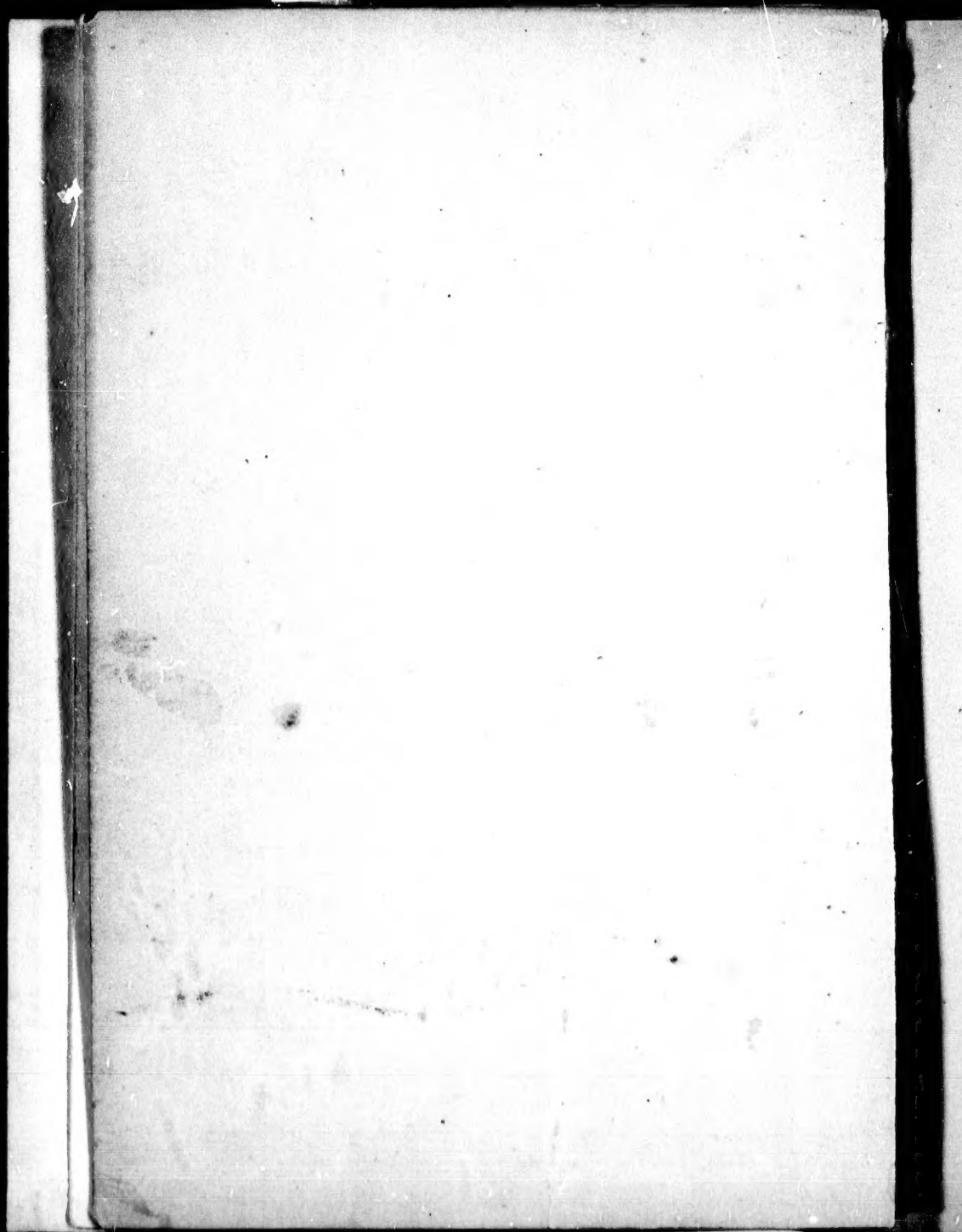
FOUR SERMONS
ON THE
HOLY SACRAMENT
OF
THE LORD'S SUPPER;

PREACHED IN ST. PETER'S CHURCH, COBOURG, DURING
THE SEASON OF ADVENT, 1880:

BY
A. N. BETHUNE, D.D.,
Archdeacon of York, and Rector of Oshawa.

TORONTO:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY A. F. VERRILL.

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THE HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

SERMON I.

1 CORINTHIANS xi. 26.—“As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”

WITH the present day, my brethren, we commence again the Christian year. This takes its beginning, not from revolutions or observations of the heavenly bodies,—not from the material sun, nor from the course and order of this perishable world, but from the rising of the “Sun of righteousness.”—The birth-day of the Saviour is fixed at a period a little onwards; but as, in the natural world, there is a twilight brightness which indicates the coming light and splendour of the sun, so, in the world of grace, we have a few weeks of preparation for the manifestation of that day when the “Sun of righteousness” is to be hailed in the fulness of his glory. Christian worshippers are not to be surprised, as it were, by the advent of this season of

rejoicing ; but time is allowed for meditation and devout exercises specially befitting that happy, yet solemn period : opportunity is graciously permitted in which to prepare their hearts for a chastened gladness, and to temper and restrain the feeling of exultation by the fear and trembling which becomes the penitent. For in contemplating the voluntary humiliation of our Lord in assuming our nature, in becoming flesh, and in suffering for us, we cannot but feel humbled ourselves ; so that in rejoicing that the Lord was pleased thus to look upon and save us, we must be abased by the remembrance of our own unworthiness,—of the sin, and the deserved punishment of sin, which produced all this degradation and ignominy for our sakes.

From the beginning of Christian time,—to mark out the practical duties which, on our part, befit the festival,—it has been appointed that the commemoration of our blessed Lord's Nativity should be accompanied with the fulfilment of an ordinance of grace, which, of all others, is calculated to bring us most closely to the Saviour ; to present Him to us in the completeness of his love and the richness of his gifts ; to shew Him, as He is, the Redeemer of every believing soul. We are then called upon to crown the celebration of our Saviour's appearance in the flesh with his own appointed and peculiar feast,—that which, in a distinguishing degree, marks out the brotherhood of Christians, and testifies their faith in Him who died for them. On this account, as an appropriate subject for our meditations during this season of Advent,—that

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we may approach, with holier affections and a deeper piety, the celebration of our Lord's mysterious incarnation, I have resolved, in dependence upon the strength and blessing of Almighty God, to appropriate the morning discourses of these Sundays in Advent to a consideration, in all the bearing of the obligation and the duty, of the solemn Sacrament of the **SUPPER OF THE LORD.**

There may be little that is new elicited in the course of these proposed remarks ; but we have no need of novelty to awaken our interest, or quicken our attention, on the subject of religion. The Bible is not a *new* Book, and it is our comfort and our confidence that it is an old one ; that its great truths and revelations are traceable upwards to the date of man's creation ; and that its very antiquity, and the long course of ages during which it hath been read and studied, have caused it to be more appreciated and better understood. And so to Christian congregations there can be little that is new in the truths and principles which, drawn from that precious fountain, are set before them : it may be so as to the form and aspect in which our teaching is presented, but not as to the material from which it is derived ; and may God grant us an " understanding heart " to feel, accept, and act upon these gracious truths !

The words of the text appear to point out how fitting such a subject of meditation is to the present season,—“ as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this

cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." **TILL HE COME**,—in these words we have an indication of one great and solemn purpose of the Church's appointed season of Advent: it is to prepare ourselves for our Lord's second coming to judgment, as well as for the worthy commemoration of his appearance in the flesh; and the text points out that this memorial of his passion in which, by his own command, we are called upon to join, links the believers of every generation to that great event. Time flows on; generations rise, and pass away; believers die, and fresh ones appear in their room; but through this never ceasing, never intermitted memorial of his love, there is a continuity of age with age,—of Christians past, and present, and to come,—of all that sleep their temporary sleep of death, with those that shall be alive at the Lord's last coming. Until he come, his death upon the cross as the atonement for sin must be our comfort, stay, and hope; and we testify the fulness of our consolation and the steadfastness of our faith in this atonement, by joining in that sacrificial feast,—by "eating of that bread and drinking of that cup."

In that well known and practical summary of our faith, the Apostles' Creed, we are called upon to make profession of our belief in the "communion of saints." This means a real and visible bond of unity and fellowship amongst the believers on the Lord Jesus; but there could be no such fellowship or union without a common tie,—a common bond to influence and keep us all together, and also to maintain our union with

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Him to whom our allegiance and our faith is due. But if we are to have this real communion with one another and with our Head, it must be known and manifested by outward acts ; it must be shewn and proved in the ordinances and means of grace ; it must be testified especially in our concord and communion in that commemorative sacrificial feast which the Lord hath instituted. To designate its end, and at the same time to mark out its influence and results, it is said by the Apostle St. Paul,—“ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the *communion* of the blood of Christ ? the bread which we break, is it not the *communion* of the body of Christ ?—And here, as these words stand, what is the meaning of “ communion ? ” Surely, a participation in the benefit of the Saviour's blood,—a freshened influence upon the earnestness and comfort of our spiritual life,—the infusion of a new and reviving energy into our condition as believers, every time that we, in heartiness of faith, “ eat of that bread and drink of that cup.”

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The wonder only is, my brethren, that any should think of neglecting it,—much more, of presuming to set it at nought. For who does not know and feel, that a work or enterprise of high promise, begun and afterwards dropped, not only confers no benefit, but stands a monument of the folly and irresolution of him that undertook it ? The Christian work, the Christian life is begun in baptism ; but who can have thought so little or so lightly of that divine and solemn ordinance, as to suppose that no after effort or responsibility is

implied in that holy and weighty covenant? Who can think that no exertion afterwards is to be made,—no struggle against the world's snares and enticements,—no warfare against the flesh and its evil passions,—no resistance to the seductions of the great tempter, the devil? 'Is nothing to be done to quicken, and revive, and keep within us the imparted grace,—nothing to preserve the good seed, and make it grow and flourish; but, on the contrary, is every thing to be indulged in that may thicken the harvest of tares, and stifle all the good and holy impulses of God's gracious Spirit?

If, then, we recognize and admit all the meaning of our position as Christians admitted into covenant with God, can we think ourselves safe in neglecting or slighting what keeps that covenant in force,—what preserves to us the favour of God through Christ,—what makes the contract binding, if we may use the words, as respects the promises of God? For, if we do not follow up a course of earnest piety and holy duty; if we do not, or strive not at least, to lead that godly and Christian life which will allow us to fulfil all holy ordinances, and join especially in the feast of the body and blood of Christ, what can avail our baptismal covenant? how can the early conferred privileges of our Christianity benefit us, when they have been annulled by neglect, or even, it may be, cast rudely and contemptuously away?

For further evidence of the obligation we are urging, let us look, my brethren, to the analogy

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between the Passover of the Jewish dispensation, and Christ the real paschal Lamb. In regard to the former, it was, in the Law, emphatically stated,—“The man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.”—To revert to the immediate occasion of that institution, who will not understand that if any Israelite,—through perversity or pride,—from a distrust, real or feigned, of the efficacy of the means provided,—or from an alleged unwillingness to adopt what the wisdom of this world could not comprehend, or approve of; suppose that any such should have foreborne to sacrifice the paschal Lamb, or sprinkle with its blood the casements of his doors, can we doubt that the destroying angel would have smitten that house, as well as the habitations of the Egyptians? And as this text assures us, it was just the same in after years. As long as that dispensation lasted,—until it became merged in one more pure and spiritual, the Passover, as the memorial of God’s mercy and of their deliverance, must be kept; otherwise, they should be cut off from among his people,—their privileges would be forfeited,—they should be dealt with as aliens, idolaters, and outcasts.

But if Jews, my brethren, dared not, without a penalty so fearful, neglect the means at first, and the commemoration afterwards, of the deliverance; shall we be justified, shall we incur a lighter sin, if we

neglect the means of the greater deliverance which has been vouchsafed to us? Christ is *our* Passover; but when He, our paschal Lamb, is slain, may we, without sin,—without fear, indeed, of God's overwhelming wrath,—turn away from the sacrifice as worthless, or needless to us? May we forbear from applying, through faith,—and that faith above all things manifested in this commemorative feast,—the sprinkling of that blood to ourselves, and yet be safe? May we, by disregard of that holy banquet, lose sight and sense of the propitiatory sacrifice made for us upon the cross, and yet not forfeit the privileges of God's people,—not be “cut off” from his chosen Israel,—not be rejected from his kingdom of glory?

If He be a God eternal and unchangeable, “the same yesterday, to-day, and forever,” then must the exactions of his justice, as well as his purposes of mercy, stand as firmly now as then. The redeemed of Christ, not less than those who were redeemed under the Law, are bound to the way and the means of the redemption provided for them. If Christians, then, neglect their paschal sacrifice,—in other words, look off from Christ for safety to some device or means which God has not revealed,—they must “bear their sin;” and if they do not timely have recourse to the only refuge, they must “die in their sin.”

But, brethren, is it not neglecting Christ, and looking off from Christ, if we regard not, and share not in, the commemoration of his passion, appointed

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so solemnly by himself? Faith, we are taught, is the main spring of Christian conduct: this it is which impels us to the Saviour; and without it, we could not be considered to have either "part or lot" in him. But what must be the character of that faith which moves us not to an enjoined and positive religious duty,—to that which constitutes the representation of the Saviour's sufferings, and is revealed as a channel of his sanctifying and invigorating grace to our hearts? It would seem, indeed, as if Christian faith was parted with, when the Lord's Supper is neglected; as if there was an abandonment of the great principle which causes us to recognize and rest upon the Saviour; a surrender of the tie which links the sinner to the Redeemer, and makes him capable of the deliverance wrought out upon the cross.—Many may deny that it is so; and say that, notwithstanding the neglect complained of, their dependence is still upon Christ Jesus for salvation. They may be sincere in that presumption, but there are no grounds for it. The essence, the meaning, the proof of faith is in obedience; but where this is not rendered, we are bound to dispute and doubt the genuineness of the faith which is professed. It is a name and sound, but not a principle: it is a theory only, to all practical purposes valueless: there is nothing operative or quickening about it, and therefore it must be reckoned at and go for nothing.

Are we not right, indeed, in believing that this very ordinance of his holy Supper was instituted for the perpetual manifestation, as well as steady revival, of

the faith which the Lord insists upon? And, in this view of the case, we must feel persuaded that every time that ordinance is neglected,—every time it is passed by or overlooked,—every time, from whatsoever cause, it is slighted,—there is a giving up, nay, a casting away of Christian faith. Nor does it here mitigate the evil or the offence, that people at such times may plead impediments from things without, or things within, to the fulfilment of this duty. Such impediments are working just the influence, under any circumstances, that it should be the great business of life to counteract: they are destroying in the soul the principle of obedience, sapping the root of faith in Christ, and estranging us from God. So that, in reality, they only aggravate the evil of our case, by keeping us away from duty and holding us at a distance from God; and whilst we are, through our own indolence or perverseness, kept in that condition, we can have no reasonable hope of salvation should we thus be surprised by death.

So far, my brethren, I have treated of the duty of partaking of the Lord's Supper on the great ground of its obligation from the very nature and meaning of the ordinance,—from the high principle of Christian faith involved in its very constitution and appointment. This will prepare us for other considerations, touching this great duty, upon which I purpose hereafter to dwell. And, in furtherance of the arguments I have already laid before you, I would ask, in conclusion,—What should we think of one who, pleading his privileges as

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a subject and claiming protection from the laws of his country, refused to bear his share in the necessary burdens and imposts that are to maintain the majesty and power of those laws, and uphold the very structure of society upon that moral basis by which our protection is secured? And what should we think of professions of loyalty from one who refused to take up arms at the command of his sovereign, when his country was menaced by foreign foes or internal enemies?—Would not indifference, in such an hour of peril, be proof of treason as real and as punishable as if it were evinced in positive desertion or open hostility?

But to adapt the similitude.—What must we think of the Christian soldier, pledged from his infancy to his Master's standard, who disregards even the signs and evidences of his loyal allegiance; and, virtually deserting his Lord, keeps on the side of those enemies, "the world, the flesh, and the devil," which he had covenanted to renounce and fight against? What must we think of him, who, pleading the privileges of sonship and claiming protection from wrath eternal, declines to employ his spiritual armour in his Master's cause; and offers, as his exemption from the duties which that Master claims, his unwillingness, from a temper wedded to the world, to make a solitary sacrifice on his behalf?

"Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee, thou wicked servant,"—may not such expect this language to be addressed to them? But God forbid that

any should continue in this wickedness. Rather let them awake to consideration and watchfulness,—correct what is amiss,—root out what is contrary to God's will,—revive what is holy and pure,—and “strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die.”



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SERMON II.

1 CORINTHIANS, x. 16.—“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”

NOTHING, my brethren, can more forcibly represent to us the nature as well as the benefits of the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, than the words of the text; words, too, which serve to prove and make clear the obligation we all are under to participate in this blessed ordinance. They shew very distinctly that it is a mark and evidence of our fellowship with Christ,—nay more, of our communion with him in the benefits of his death; that, believing on Jesus, and looking to Him for salvation, we are bound to prove the sincerity of our faith and the reality of our interest in his cross and passion, by uniting in this commemorative feast.—And my design is now, more particularly, to shew that such was the intention and purpose of our Lord in instituting this Holy Sacrament, and that such intention is proved from the sentiments and practice of the Church in every age.

In looking, brethren, to the several ages of the Church, we are not to limit ourselves to the Christian dispensation. As soon as Adam fell, the Church began. Nay, we may consider it as having had an existence even before his fall, though in a different aspect and effect. Had Adam never fallen, he and all the multitude that should spring from him, would have formed a Church, in which,—more perfect type of the highest heaven,—praise and thanksgiving should alone be heard. There would have been no sin, and therefore no need of confession of sin ; no gift nor blessing from Almighty God withheld, and therefore no cause for the supplication of His bounties. It would have been, in the inhabitants of the world, one continued, never-ending strain of praise for their creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life.

But when Adam fell, there was then a further covenant. Sin entered into the world, and an atonement for sin must be provided : death, present and eternal, was threatened ; and if a temporal dissolution must ensue, the way and the means must be devised by which the “wages of sin,” eternal death, shall be averted.

Of this promised sin-offering, even the patriarchal history contains many indications ; nor were these cheering revelations limited to words, but declared also by signs which should be a more lively and impressive remembrancer of the comforting announcement of a Deliverer. The first, or at least most

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obvious, of these ritual indications were *sacrifices* ; but we have evidence that there was something more. We read, in the early part of the Book of Genesis, of "the tree of life" in the midst of the paradise of God ; on which a pious and learned prelate, Bishop Horne, remarks,—“The tree of life was, doubtless, a material tree, producing material fruit ; proper, as such, for the nourishment of the body. The question will be, whether it was intended to be eaten, in common, for that end alone ; or whether it was not rather set apart, to be partaken of, at a certain time or times, as a symbol or sacrament of that celestial principle which nourisheth the soul unto immortality ; meaning, by that term, not a natural immortality, or bare existence, but that divine, spiritual, eternal life, which was lost by the fall, and the restitution of which is now ‘the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ The thing speaks for itself. A material tree could only confer eternal life as a divinely instituted symbol or sacrament ; as ‘an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace, given to him, as a means whereby he was to receive the same, and a pledge to assure him thereof.’ Hereby he would be continually reminded of the truth communicated to him, without all doubt, from the beginning ; that there was another and a better life than that led by him in the terrestrial and figurative Paradise ; a life on which he was to set his affections, and to which he was to look as the end, the reward, the crown of his obedience ; a life supported, as it was given, by emanation from that Being

who only hath life in himself, and is the fountain from which, in various ways, it flows to all his creatures."

Proceed we further on in the Patriarchal age, and we have indications again of the comfort and refreshment of these sacramental signs. When the victory of Abraham over part of the host of the four kings is recorded, and when the king of Sodom is introduced as going forth to congratulate him upon it, another remarkable personage, Melchizedek, king of Salem, and "priest of the most high God," salutes him too, and brings forth "bread and wine," and blesses him. In this whole transaction there is something of a religious character; the priest of God, and the blessing, appear to render the distribution of the bread and wine more than a common-place occurrence. If there was an intention of material and physical nourishment in the dispensing of them, the sacred acts and offices accompanying would seem to shew that it was to be looked upon also as something religious and spiritual, —a sign, and remembrancer, and pledge of a higher and greater deliverance to Abraham's progeny, when, in the fullness of time, the victory should be not over temporal enemies only, but over sin and death, the power of the grave, and Satan's kingdom.

It cannot but be well known to you, my brethren, that the Law under Moses was little more than a reiteration of the Law under the Patriarchs. In all its great particulars,—in what referred especially to

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Christ, the antitype of both,—we can trace it upwards even to the Fall ; but while they had, all along, their offerings, the figurative atonement for sin ; the sacrifice of the paschal Lamb,—ordered to be continued while that dispensation lasted,—was, in a more marked degree, commemorative of Christ's oblation on the cross. And it was the more remarkable, as being sacramental in its character ; a standing memorial of a great deliverance past, and the type of a greater one to come ; something to quicken hope, while it awakened thanksgiving ; at each recurrence of it, a refreshment and comfort amidst the woes and trials of their pilgrimage ; reminding them, by more than a naked sign, that the God of mercy is unchangeable, and that their Deliverer from Egyptian bondage would be their Deliverer still in every after trouble and distress, if they but adhered to the covenant which this annual commemoration brought so impressively and cheerfully before them.

Such was the **Passover**, the Jews' great Sacrament ; but ages passed away, the "fulness of time" arrived, the true Lamb of God was sacrificed, and types and shadows gave place to the high and spiritual reality. The Lord of glory assumed our nature, and conversed with men ; but, after a short sojourn of grief and sorrow, he departed from us. Yet he left us the Comforter ; and he left us his feast, where, to the true penitent and real believer, he is always present. He left us the significant representation of himself, the memorial of his passion, tokens of his love ; something

for the eye to rest upon, as well as for the mind to contemplate; something for the hands to handle, as well as for the heart to hold within its deep recesses. Yes, with the eye of faith we discern the Saviour there; in that bread and wine, we see presented more vividly before us the cross and passion of the Lord; in that feast, so simple and yet so solemn, we have Christ, in all the fullness of his love and condescension, placed before us; in those creatures, thus received by faith, we experience solace to the weary heart,—refreshment to the fainting soul,—strength for the struggles of the spirit with the flesh and the world. Here, in short, we have a “continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.” And thus, by this visible memorial of the Lord’s atonement, we are urged to mortify and crucify our own evil affections; we are moved, by this continual representation of its benefits, to evince a never-failing thankfulness to our God and Saviour; we are impelled to prove our hearts’ deep gratitude, by having in us “the same mind which was also in Christ Jesus.”

It were a sad impiety, my brethren, to suppose that the Lord would frame an institution, at a time so solemn and under circumstances so impressive, without intending that it should stand for ever as a memorial of him, as well as a channel of the benefits conferred by his death. Not so thought his first followers and disciples: with them there was a high and deep appreciation of the boon thus conferred. Thousands

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were gathered into the flock of Christ ; and it was the praise of all, that they “continued in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in the *breaking of bread*.” And that there might be no misconception, no doubt as to their practice on these occasions, it is said a little after, “And they continued daily in the temple, and *breaking bread* from house to house.” That is, they performed their ordinary devotions in God’s still recognized temple ; but the ministrations peculiarly Christian were fulfilled, as it has been judiciously interpreted, “at the house,”—in the house set apart for those solemn and commemorative exercises ; the same, we can believe, in which they were all with one accord the day of Pentecost.

We go onwards in the Apostolic history to the time when believers were vastly multiplied, and Churches were established far and near. Speaking of the journeys of St. Paul, and of his arrival at Troas, the sacred historian says, “Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to *break bread*, Paul preached unto them.”—From this we perceive that the solemn commemoration of the Lord’s sacrifice for sin was never stopped, was never intermitted ; that it was maintained, and steadily kept up, as a memorial precious in itself and binding as commanded by the Saviour : more than this, that it was part of the stated duties of the Lord’s day,—as usual an obligation then to break this sacramental bread, as to join in prayers and praises.

Again, St. Paul's epistles teach us that, when he wrote, the same was an established custom,—the rule of all the Churches. In addressing his Corinthian converts, he takes occasion to correct errors and abuses that had crept into the institution ; to regulate, and to restore to their pure intention, the antecedent feasts of charity. In doing so, he takes the opportunity of recapitulating the cause and the manner of the whole institution of the Supper of the Lord,—“For I have received of the Lord,” he says, “that which also I delivered unto you ;” explaining then the manner in which the Lord appointed and ordained it ; and ending with the words which formed the subject of our last discourse, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”

And if we pass on beyond the limits of the Apostolic age, we shall find the Christians,—now in every country of the habitable world,—whether in prosperity or adversity, in the calm of peace or in the stern trials of persecution, uniformly observing this holy and sacrificial feast. The writings of fathers and martyrs, then and for ages onwards, are too full of allusions, expressed in the most glowing terms, of the privileges and benefits of this blessed Sacrament, to need recapitulation ; and we have the words of a learned and distinguished heathen to attest, that before day light the Christians came together to sing a hymn to Christ as God, and to bind themselves by

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an oath,—or, to take his expression literally, by a *sacrament*,—to commit no wickedness, and to abstain from every evil deed.

There is one point, my brethren, instructive in all this history. We are assured, upon the testimony of these fathers and confessors, that it was a feast universally participated in; and that it was a grief and distress to any Christian to be excluded from it. To some this exclusion may be said officially to have extended: the extremely young,—the novices, as the newly-converted were termed,—the catechumens, or such as were still under instruction and not yet sufficiently informed of the great and leading principles of Christianity,—for such as these there was a temporary exclusion, but one that involved not any moral impediment or included any reflection upon personal character. But there were others formally shut out from this holy and invigorating feast; who, from immoral or ungodly conduct, were pronounced unworthy to approach its high and solemn mysteries. Far, however, was this case from one that tended to awaken the pride of individual independence, or to harden the heart: it served rather to soften, and in the spiritual sense to break it; to cause this sufferer in spirit to go softly and penitently,—to mourn over his transgressions,—to grieve for his estrangement from the Lord's house, and the best and holiest privileges there,—and never to be content until he had recovered the position he had forfeited, and been hailed by the brethren as one of themselves again in all the fulness of privilege, duty, and hope.

If, my brethren, we discern a different state of things now, it should be our labour, as far as ourselves are concerned, to correct it. That wholesome discipline of early Christianity is unhappily relaxed, weakened, and well nigh gone; and the excommunication now from the feast of the Lord's Supper, is a *self-excommunication*, indulged in too widely,—it is to be feared, too, without much sorrow or compunction of heart, and with little reference to God's displeasure, or to the consequences at last of the neglect and contempt of our Redeemer and Judge.

Alas! in such a state of things, does not our blessed and holy Christianity exhibit, in its practical influence, too much the aspect of a barren land; with here and there a thriving plant, but in its larger space appearing blighted and fruitless! In other words, here and there a consistent, sincere, and devoted follower of the Lord; but where far the larger number are self-seekers and self-pleasers, negligent and indifferent; and where too many have thrown off well nigh altogether the form and spirit of their Christian vocation. They "eat, and drink, and are merry," perchance because "to-morrow they die," while it is this very fact which should make them watchful and thoughtful. The certainty that "to-morrow they die," should assure them that there is no time to waste thus in irreligious neglect and unholy practices. Rather should it urge them to prove that they are on "the Lord's side," by doing what the Lord commands,—by fulfilling his positive injunctions,—by walking in the steps of his most blessed example.

Communion with a civil society, connexion with a human association for good or evil, is testified by an adherence to its rules, and a strict upholding of its ordinances and formalities. It is a test of union one with another; it is a bond of fellowship with their head; it is the proof of their adherence to the foundation upon which they profess to build.—In a higher and holier sense, my brethren, *we* must shew our dependence upon and connexion with Christ, and our communion one with another as belonging to him, by maintaining the rules and tests of fellowship which he has ordained. It has been so, as we have seen, from the beginning; first, by types and shadows, and afterwards by a more distinct and significant memorial. But the reasonableness of this it cannot be necessary to dwell upon: no where can it be more clearly or forcibly represented than in the words of the text,—“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the *communion* of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the *communion* of the body of Christ?”

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SERMON III.

ST. JOHN, vi. 53.—“Then Jesus said unto them verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”

IF these words, my brethren, be strictly applicable to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we shall feel that they convey a command of irresistible force. Nothing, indeed, could more strongly express the obligation for which we are contending; nothing could have more power to assure us of the necessity of holding this visible and appointed communion with Christ. But even supposing these words not to be directly applicable to the Sacrament of the Eucharist; supposing it to be erroneous to appropriate them to this subject, they are not at all stronger than the words which our Saviour used at the institution of the feast itself; “Take, eat, this is *my body*: this is *my blood* of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins.”

The words of the text may not improbably have been intended to mean our Lord's doctrine: his *flesh*, the bread of life; his *blood*, a near, intimate, and necessary connexion with his atonement. To partake of the Messiah truly, as has been well stated, is to partake of himself, his pure nature, his righteousness, his spirit; and to live, and grow, and receive nourishment from that participation of him: all which he expresses in a lively and comprehensive manner, by the phrase of eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

But though there may be force in the impression that these words of our Lord were not originally applicable to the holy Sacrament we are considering, as having been spoken before its actual institution; yet to us who hear them now, after that ordinance has been formally established, there is not only no impropriety, but rather a suitableness, in thus appropriating them. And this, as we have said, because the language employed at the institution of this Sacrament is just as direct and strong. And the Church in fact reiterates that language in these words of her comprehensive Catechism—"The body and blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." That is, they who come, with a right faith and an earnest Christian feeling, to that holy Sacrament; they who receive it piously and worthily are, after a spiritual manner, partakers of Christ's body and blood; they become one with Christ, and Christ with them; they really and truly partake of the benefits of his passion and media-

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tion, as living members of his body. A late prelate observes, "as he is the 'bread of life,' they are then nourished, strengthened, and supported by him; they receive him by faith; by faith they feed upon him; and the divine life which is begun in their souls, is thus, in a spiritual manner, upheld and carried on in them."

When, indeed, St. Paul speaks of the participation of these elements as the "communion" of Christ's body and blood, he expresses all which the words of the text, in their application to the Lord's Supper, could possibly be thought to convey. "Communion," as here employed, denotes not only an association, but intimate connexion,—making the parties thus engaged, as it were, one. So that, in this blessed Sacrament,—in shewing thus the Lord's death until he come,—we have not only a *sign* and *memorial* of our belief and profession, but a communication also, in some spiritual and mysterious way, of the efficacy of Christ's atonement. There is, by this means, to the faithful an application of the benefit and blessing of his sacrifice on the cross; a renewal to such, at every communion, of the comfort, hope, and joy which flow from the acceptance of this great truth,—justification by faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his perpetual intercession for such as lay hold upon that faith, at his Father's right hand.

This, my brethren, we must feel to be a deep and mysterious subject; calculated to raise and purify our

thoughts upon this solemn duty ; permitting us not to view it as a bare memorial or merely outward sign, but directing our hearts and hopes and confidence to an inward and attendant efficacy,—to something that can warm, refresh, invigorate,—something that can kindle up the decaying spiritual life,—something that can rouse, and cheer, and strengthen those energies, which, through the world's conflicts and temptations, are wont to grow weak and fail.

But high and elevated as our faith should be on this divine commemorative feast, we are not allowed, by a sound and scriptural appreciation of its import, to rush into flights of enthusiasm or sink into depths of superstition. A right understanding of this Sacrament will cause us to avoid those mystic views which would spiritualize the ordinance away, and leave no outward sign to contemplate, nor, through the outward senses, allow us to appropriate the inward grace to the heart's holiest affections. And, on the other hand, a correct view of this Sacrament will be found directly and positively to contradict the novel tenet of *Transubstantiation*,—which asserts that the bread and wine in the Sacrament is literally and substantially changed into the body and blood of Christ. Our branch of the Church Catholic protests against this error, as “repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthrowing the nature of a Sacrament, and giving occasion to many superstitions.” It is absurd and irrational; too, from the fact that our Lord, when he used the words that instituted this Sacrament, was still in his own person

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before those to whom he addressed them ; so that to be consistent in this Romish view, it would be necessary to believe that His whole and complete nature was transferred to those elements, at the very time he was standing before them, and before his body was broken, or his blood shed, upon the cross.

Again, this doctrine of Transubstantiation, if there be any thing in it, must be considered to involve what is directly miraculous ; for it cannot be thought less than a miracle that bread and wine should be converted into the actual body and blood of Christ. But to assent to, or be persuaded of a miracle, requires the testimony of the senses ; for without some conviction brought to them, we could not know or say what occurrence was ordinary or extraordinary. Without such a testimony, — of the understanding, sight, or hearing, — none could have known, for instance, whether our Lord performed a miracle, or not : it was only the evidence of their senses which could have enabled them to judge and decide. But here, in Transubstantiation, we are called upon to believe a miracle without any testimony presented either to our reason or our senses : in fact, we must reject the testimony of both, and cast it formally aside, in order to accept and believe that doctrine.

But this is not the manner of God's dealing with his rational and intelligent creatures. We are required to have faith, a faith unlimited in the powers of God to effect the most wondrous things by the meanest

instruments ; but we are not required to believe contradictions and essential impossibilities. Faith degenerates into superstition and "unsound thinking," when it would include what opposes the tenor and spirit of God's word, and what the Church universal, in all the earliest and purest ages without an exception, has maintained as the meaning of that word.

Yet, my brethren, while we discard such dangerous fancies, and so hurtful a superstition, we must be careful to hold fast a right and scriptural faith upon this point. Our Lord has honoured this sacramental ordinance as no other ordinance has been honoured : we must view it, therefore, with reverence and as a "great mystery." And as the bread and wine are, in this holy supper, on the highest authority said to be to the faithful the "*communion* of the body and blood of Christ," we are not allowed to separate our Lord's presence from this Sacrament. True, it is there in some spiritual and inconceivable way ; but still, upon the authority of Scripture, it is there. While we taste and handle the material elements, we may not be conscious of the spiritual life within or around them ; yet to the faithful it is not the less vouchsafed. The Christian believer makes not this the subject of cavilling and speculation, because it is not manifest to reason or lies not within the compass of human experience : it is God's appointment, and that is enough for him. The humble and confiding Christian will not argue that God does not need the medium of sensible objects, such as bread and wine, to invigorate

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and sustain the spiritual man within : it is enough for him that God has chosen to use such a medium. It is enough for him to be assured,—and there is an unspeakable richness of comfort in that assurance,—that the Lord, who by his blood hath bought him, did institute this ordinance for the express purpose of conveying, through it, to his true and faithful followers continual supplies of that new life which they derived from him.

How beautifully and simply does our Church Catechism express this view, in describing the benefits of this holy Sacrament as "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine !" Yes, and with how animating a motive for regularly and faithfully fulfilling this duty do these words furnish us !—The strengthening and refreshing of our souls is promised ; and do they not need *strength* ? We have but to look at our hearts within, and at the world without, for an answer to this. From experience we know too well the nature of the conflict, the terrors of the warfare, which we all have to bear. The world's enticements are hard to be withstood, the world's buffetings hard to be endured ; and we have but a weak nature to sustain us in the struggle. Without help from above, we should faint and be dispirited ; and when the Lord, therefore, vouchsafes his presence and his succour in this banquet of his body and blood, shall we not avail ourselves of the strength he so graciously promises to impart ?

"The refreshing of our souls," too,—how much, in our pilgrim warfare, do we need this? How prone are we to grow weak and faint in our Christian calling,—to feel a weariness in the combat with all our spiritual foes around us,—to grow lukewarm in our fidelity to the Lord's standard,—to be languid in prayer, when we need to be always earnest in that duty,—to be distrustful of God's promises, when dependence upon them constitutes the real joy and comfort of life,—to make even shipwreck of faith, when, without it, "it is impossible to please God!"

For the correction of all this weakness and the supply of all these deficiencies, it is indeed comforting to have such a provision: but then, there are qualifications insisted upon; there is, many will argue, something even stern and appalling in the requirements from those who are to be partakers of this feast. True, my brethren: Christianity is not a common-place, but a holy thing; holy in its beginning, holy in its purpose and end; and all connected with it should be holy too. Christians in early days had even the distinguished name of *saints* assigned them, to mark their separation from the world in belief, and privilege, and conversation. And the Lord's Supper is but a reiteration of our Baptismal engagements,—a renewal of the vows and promises made at that solemn time. All the Lord's ordinances, indeed, mean and imply this,—that "every one that nameth the name of Christ should depart from iniquity." That is our obligation, that is our covenant from the first; and we but renew it, as in duty always

bound,—we profess our determination to stand fast to it, every time that, in sincerity of purpose, we partake of the Supper of the Lord.

But let us observe more particularly what those requirements are: our Catechism is an admirable explanation, and it thus states them,—“To examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life; to have a lively faith in God’s mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and to be in charity with all men.”

Now, in all this, what *new* duty are we called upon to fulfil? What is there here insisted upon, which is not required from all who profess themselves Christians, whether they be communicants or not? What terms, what conditions, what qualifications are here proposed, which are not, under any circumstances indispensable to salvation?

Who has not a proneness to be a self-deceiver, and has not need therefore to “examine himself?” Who is not a sinner, and required truly to repent? Who can pass a day without being upbraided by conscience with his shortcomings and misdoings? Who feels not, that he is a grievous transgressor against God, and does not acknowledge that the remembrance of his sins ought to be grievous to him and their burden intolerable? And can we be *saved* in our unrepented sins?

Can we hope for God's mercy and pardon, if those sins give us no concern and awaken in us no effort to be free from them?

Again, who, alone and unaided, can work out his salvation? Who can procure redemption, pardon from God, and everlasting life, apart from Christ's merits? From all, therefore, is required a "lively faith in God's mercy through Christ." That is our only hope, our only refuge as sinners; and this redemption having been wrought out for us, can we, if we rest upon and are influenced by it, fail to cherish a "thankful remembrance of his death?"

And who, my brethren, can be called a Christian, —one, at least, who acts in a spirit worthy of his profession,—that does not labour to fulfil the second table of the moral law, to love his neighbour as himself; to bear no malice nor hatred in his heart, but to be "in charity with all men;" to strive, in short, to feel and act as the Saviour felt and acted,—dispensing his bounties to the just and the unjust, to the unthankful and the evil?

Will any, then, say that these are qualifications for a particular ordinance, or a special religious duty; and not rather say, that they are the every-day qualifications of the Christian,—not to be put on or off, as solemn occasions come about and depart; but to be habitually worn,—a never-ceasing appendage of our

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religious being,—a mark and token, never to be laid aside but always exhibited, of the truth and reality of our life in Christ? Could less, we may ask, be expected of believers on Christ under any circumstances? would less be consistent with the common and ordinary profession of our faith in Him as a Redeemer and Mediator?

Such qualifications may, indeed, be called the "marriage garment," which must be found upon all who are admitted to the feast of redemption; upon all who are summoned from the "highways and hedges" of sin,—from the broad road of destruction, the dark land of the shadow of death,—to enter into the covenant of salvation with the Saviour of the world.—Without Christ, where and what are we? unreconciled to God through Christ, what must be our doom? But redeemed, through that precious sin-offering, from the wages of iniquity, dare we forget that we must be a "peculiar people, zealous of good works?" And can we think that a "peculiar people," such as Christians are required to be, may exhibit less of holiness and watchfulness than the qualifications for this holy Sacrament imply, and yet be consistent or safe? The Gospel itself, in all its hopes and privileges as well as ordinances, is a perpetual feast where the Lord's presence always is; and in the Lord's presence any where, we must not be found unclothed with his robe of righteousness. We cannot enter the courts of the Lord's house; we cannot pray to Him in the midst of the congregation, or in the privacy of our own abodes; we cannot, at

least, do so acceptably, religiously, or consistently, unless our aim and effort is to be "holy as he is holy in all manner of conversation."

The qualifications, then, for the Supper of the Lord, are nothing new, peculiar, or distinctive; they are what we should possess continually, if we hope to be saved. With less than these, we cannot look with confidence to Christ's atonement; with less than these, we cannot hope to die in peace, or look forward to the judgment-seat and the last account with any thing else than the dread of condemnation. But as we hope to be saved, let us even now put that armour on, and thus be ready, daily and hourly, for our perpetual warfare with our spiritual foes; be ready, above all, for the dread conflict with the last enemy; and through him that loved us and gave himself for us, be assured of victory.

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SERMON IV.

1 CORINTHIANS, xi. 27.—“ Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”

HAVING laid before you, my brethren, the nature of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the obligations to partake of it, and the qualifications which are required in those who approach it, we might seem to have placed this high privilege and duty beyond the reach of dispute or objection. We might confidently entertain the hope, that all would concur in this view of its importance and benefit, and be anxious to gain the strength and refreshment it has the promise of affording to the Christian pilgrim ; and that all would be moved to enter, without delay, upon the earnest consideration and hearty fulfilment of that “ bounden duty.”

Like those, however, who were called at the first to the banquet of the Gospel, and who, on the gracious

summons of the Master of the feast, "began all with one consent to make excuse," there are, unhappily, too many now who, conscious of their sin and danger in neglecting,—we grieve to say it, habitually neglecting,—the ordinances of the Lord, and this memorial of his atoning sacrifice especially, plead excuses, and in those excuses seek to justify themselves, rather than directly and penitently condemn themselves for the omission and transgression.

1. A prominent ground of reluctance in entering upon this duty, are the strong, and, as they may be deemed, appalling words of the text, and the language even more startling which follows:—"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

Now it must at once be believed that there was something special and particular in the *sort* of unworthiness to which St. Paul is here referring; that there was something of a marked and presumptuous character in the sin of those to whom he thus addressed himself. It cannot be thought that he was expressing himself in vague or general terms, or that his exhortations and rebukes did not clearly and expressly point to something which his hearers would at once understand and act upon. It is only reasonable to think so; because there would, amongst any community of Christians, be so many differences of opinion as to what constituted "unworthiness," that either *all* would appropriate it to themselves, or *all* perhaps might think

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they were free from it. The history of the times, and many incidental expressions in the chapter before us, will sufficiently explain what the Apostle meant.

It appears, then, that, in the primitive Church, there was a custom of celebrating what were called "feasts of charity," before the Lord's Supper in its full solemnity was entered^d upon. The design of these, as their name imparts, was strictly benevolent and charitable. It was a feast, partaking in some degree of an ordinary meal, in which both rich and poor united; and as, in those days, there were many amongst the believers in the deepest need and poverty, the rich, on such occasions, were accustomed to bring with them what would supply the wants of the poor. But abuses, it appears, soon crept in: those who were abundantly provided, in utter thoughtlessness of the solemn time, came to revel on their own supplies of meat and drink; banquetted there, as St. Paul charges them, even to excess; while, at the same time, the poor were overlooked, and, during the rioting and feasting of the rest, went empty and hungry away.

Surely, then, they who turned an institution having a holy and religious purpose, into an unseemly occasion of carnal gratification, were wickedly regardless of the great purpose of their coming together; with this manifest perversion of what was religious and pure, they were indeed "eating and drinking unworthily;" with such a fearful neglect or heedlessness of the awful solemnities of this Sacrament, they

might well be accused of "not discerning the Lord's body," and "eating and drinking damnation to themselves."

The word "damnation," however, as here employed, does not necessarily mean that eternal condemnation which it is generally used to signify. Strictly interpreted, it means a *judgment*; and a judgment, according to circumstances, is always understood to vary in its extent. There are good reasons, from the context, for believing that St. Paul refers here to a *temporal* judgment,—to something which might warn and rouse them,—something to induce them to correct their evil practices, and cause them to repent. We infer this from his own language,—“for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep;” many, in the words of the Church’s interpretation, “are plagued with divers diseases and sundry kinds of death.”

All this, my brethren, shews that no argument is really to be founded upon this language of St. Paul for viewing the Lord’s Supper as an appalling or repulsive ordinance, involving more than ordinary peril to those who do not rightly use it. Not, however, that we may venture to enter upon this, or any other religious duty, lightly or carelessly: but the life of a serious, earnest Christian is a continual preparation for that and every other solemn service; and if we are not qualified to join in this most invigorating

communion with the Lord, it is not difficult to see and be persuaded that we are just as much unqualified to pray to Him, or praise Him.

2. This leads us to another difficulty in the minds of some.—They complain that they do not, or cannot, approach this Sacrament with a lively, spiritual perception of its import and efficacy; that they are without those strong feelings, of ardent faith and piety which befit them who come to so solemn a communion with their Redeemer; that they have not the fervour of love, the glow of hope, and warmth of charity, which ought to animate the Christian when he comes to partake of these pledges of his salvation.

In a multitude of instances, my brethren, we cannot wonder that it is so. For how can faith be lively, or love be warm, or devotion earnest, or piety awake, if no means,—especially the appointed means,—are used to inflame and quicken them? How can the lamp burn brightly, when it is never trimmed? How can we gain the Lord's strength and comeliness, if we shrink from all communion with the Lord? How can there be growth in grace, when the people stand idle always at the vineyard's portals? How shall that angel of joy, that messenger of peace and healing descend upon us, when we will not, like the cripple at Bethesda, watch and wait for the Saviour's interposing help?

But here let us be upon our guard against erroneous impressions,—the many wrong conceptions that prevail of this and other pious duty. Religion is too pure and bright a thing to bear affinity to the excitement of the carnal mind, or to the feelings of the earth-stained heart. With the dross of this world, the grace of God has no communion; and oftentimes, the flights of enthusiasm, the excitements of devotion, the burning thoughts and burning words that are mingled up with spiritual exercises, are, in their origin and nature, carnal, sensual, earthly only. It is the natural man, in many cases, usurping the spiritual one; the heat and fire of the human constitution counterfeiting the pure bright light of religious warmth and holiness. The first, best test of piety is humility; meekness and gentleness are the most satisfactory evidences of God's grace holding its legitimate dominion within us; a sense of sin, a dread of estrangement from our Creator and Redeemer,—these are things that make us go softly and penitently. True devotion is ever quiet and unostentatious; deep feeling is always still; while noisy and wild excitements attendant upon religious duty are always suspicious, and evince in practice but too surely that they have neither strength nor permanence. A sober, steady prosecution of religious obligation is always the most satisfactory; for intoxications of the spirit and the feelings have, like all others, their reaction: from their very lightness they soon evaporate; and when that takes place, there is more languor, dulness, and deadness than ever.

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3. Another excuse for not joining in this holy communion, which we sometimes hear preferred, is,—that so many unworthy persons are found to participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and therefore *they* cannot come.—Language and feeling like this constrain us, alas ! to the fear, that there will be to the world's end the Pharisee, as well as the Sadducee, in the Lord's heritage ; for what, in temper, does such a plea amount to but this,—“ God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican ?” If, indeed, we were to push this argument and the principle which dictates it, it would force men out of the Church, and out of Christianity itself. Christianity contains many unworthy professors ; many of the wicked and vicious are called by that name ; and therefore we will none of it ! Such would be the effect of this reasoning,—reasoning which our Lord most positively condemned in permitting amongst his Apostles a Judas who betrayed him, and a Peter who should deny him ; the last about to be a penitent and an honour to his cause, the first to die in grief and despair ;—reasoning, indeed, upon which he afterwards pronounced his sentence of rebuke, when he compared the mixed multitudes of those who should constitute his Church and kingdom to the good and bad fishes gathered by a net cast into the sea.

And, apart from the presumption, how unjust would such a judgment often be ? For who but God can read the secrets of the heart ? Who but He can tell

what penitence and piety may lurk within the breast, when to the world without the signs perhaps provoke the sneer, or awake the uncharitable rebuke? Who but He can tell what inward fires of holiness may be smouldering there; and who are we, that we should quench the smoking flax or break the bruised reed? Evil ones there are in the world: evil ones, no doubt too, will sometimes compass the altar of the Lord; but the Lord, not we, are to judge and dispose of them. Our own infirmities and sins are numerous enough to engage all our thought and watchfulness, without prying too curiously into the offences or unworthiness of those around us. Better to look upon our own privileges and be thankful for them, and see that we rightly employ them, than to seek, even by indirect means, to deprive others of their joys and hopes: better, too, to regard with an anxious eye our own responsibilities as Christians, and see how we have discharged them, than, by such an ill-judged and wicked fastidiousness, throw stumbling-blocks in our brother's way, and cause him to halt and stop perhaps for ever in his spiritual progress.

4. But we must now regard another plea often advanced by persons who ought to manifest an example of diligence in this duty,—the plea that they are too much absorbed in the cares and business of the world to justify their entrance upon a service so solemn, and yet so dutiful.—There might, my brethren, be some reason in this excuse, if this world were all we had to live for; if its possessions and its comforts

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were of so much consequence as to engage all our care and effort; if there was to be no limit to the time in which these things could be enjoyed,—no eternity to provide for,—no soul with an everlasting destiny at stake—no judgment-day, upon the issues of which are to depend its misery or its bliss for ever. If these solemn and weighty things could all be discarded; if they could be made to pass from the mind as visionary dreams, or the fancies of zealots, then might people be justified in abandoning their religious duties and neglecting their God.—But if, indeed, it be otherwise, and they are persuaded of the terrible realities of death and a judgment to come; if they feel assured that that last scrutiny, and that last sentence, is just as certain as that “it is appointed unto men once to die;” O then they cannot, they dare not, suffer the engagements of earth to interfere with the business of heaven; they dare not estrange themselves from religious duties and religious privileges, because there is work in this world to be done; but rather they will feel, that however pressing and trying all this may be, the first great duty is to be “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

5. Again, there is often pleaded the excuse of being too young.—To a certain limit, my brethren, we can admit this; when the judgment is not yet matured, the understanding not fully formed, and the heart as yet without discipline under the conflicts of the world and the flesh. For this it is, no doubt, judicious to wait a reasonable time,—but not beyond it. And the

more so, because youth is the spring-time of life. Then it is that the good seed should be sown and most assiduously watered,—right principles engrafted and sedulously nurtured,—and a veneration for the ordinances of God and the duties of religion grounded and rooted in the heart. There is a fearful risk in allowing this propitious time to pass; for if the work of religion be not pursued earnestly in youth, as it should be commenced in childhood,—if persons are not trained from their earliest years to habits of piety, there can be but poor promise for the after life. The soil then becomes hardened, perhaps impervious: it is trodden down, as it were, into a condition impenetrable to the good seed of holiness, by the world's unvarying buffetings and bustle; and when impressions, by some passing providential trials, are happily made, they last not long. The soil, through long neglect, has become an uncongenial one, and they do not thrive.

We often hear of the attempt at religious excitements at such seasons, after there has been a long, dark, weary period of religious indifference or positive ungodliness: alarm, perhaps, is felt by starts, and there is disquiet and wretchedness; but religion, with its legitimate peace and comfort, is a stranger to their feelings,—they cannot realize it in its heavenly calmness and joy.

And all this they have worked out for themselves. God is still merciful, and willing that they should repent and be saved; but having hardened themselves

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by a long course of neglect and sin, the work of reconciliation, as God would have them reconciled, becomes well nigh impracticable. He would have them reconciled by a lively faith in Jesus Christ; and that faith numbers amongst its first-fruits, unfeigned devotion to God and his service. But all this they have lost the taste for, because they have preferred the world; and the world, by their own fostering of its cares and sins, has hardened them. And by and by, death comes on: and if they are not even then indifferent, dull, and dead,—passing into eternity without concern or preparation,—they are disquieted, dismayed, perhaps in despair. There are clouds and darkness, where all should be brightness and hope; there is terror and agony, where all should be peace and joy.

And how is this state of things to be counteracted? Most effectually, my brethren, by beginning the work of religion early,—by having its principles and practice established in youth,—by causing the Lord's work to be familiarized to us from childhood, and so entwined with the heart's fibres that they will grow on together, and religion and the things of religion become, what they ought to be, a part of our being.

But how can this be, if the Holy Communion, amongst other religious obligations, is habitually neglected? How can the young grow in grace, if they wait not upon all the appointed means of grace? How can they advance in meetness for the kingdom of

God, if that which realizes to us the richness of its mysteries and the fulness of its comforts, is not sought after and joined in? Piety in youth, and that piety exemplified in the faithful discharge of religious duties, is the loveliest spectacle which can be presented to human eye, or engage the sympathies of the right-feeling heart; yes, more lovely and more endearing than all that fortune, or fashion, or accomplishments merely earthly can impart,—more attractive even in the eyes of the world, wicked and misjudging as that often is; and, in the sight of God, how inconceivably more precious.

But I am warned to a conclusion, though it is a fruitful,—let us hope, too, a profitable,—theme, upon which we have entered. May some fruits, my brethren, be realized from its consideration! At our Christmas festival now so near, let us prove it; let us then shew how we are actuated. Let us shew that we are not divided between two opinions, as to God and the world; that neither earthly engagements nor worldly festivities are permitted to keep us from the feast to which the Lord hath invited us. Let us shew that we look upon the work of redemption with gratitude; that we hear the Master of the feast invoking us to come,—a dying Lord saying to us, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

By a conviction, brethren, of your weakness and your need, we appeal to you; by your obligations to obey your Lord God who died and rose again for you, we call upon you to fulfil this and every sacred duty.

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We appeal to you by your baptismal vows, to shew that you cling to the standard under which you are pledged manfully to fight; that you adhere to the cross by which you have been signed; that you maintain the weapons of your warfare, by which to contend against sin, the world, and the devil; that you are ready to bind yourselves again and again, by renewed, reiterated vows, to be the Lord's soldiers and servants for ever.

In the beautiful and impressive words of Bishop Jeremy Taylor,—“All Christian people must come to the Lord's Supper. They indeed who are in a state of sin must not come so, but yet they must come. First, they must quit their state of death, and then partake of the bread of life. They that are at enmity with their neighbours must come; that is no excuse for not coming, only they must not bring their enmity with them, but leave it and then come. They that have variety of secular employment must come; only they must leave their secular thoughts and affections behind them, and then come and converse with God. If any man be well grown in grace, he must needs come, because he is excellently disposed to so holy a feast; but he that is but in the infancy of piety had need to come, that so he may grow in grace. The strong must come, lest they become weak; and the weak that they may become strong. The sick man must come to be cured; the healthful to be preserved. They that have leisure must come, because they have no excuse; they that have no leisure must come hither,

that by so excellent religion they may sanctify their business. The penitent sinners must come, that they may be justified; and they that are justified, that they may be justified still. They that have fears, and great reverence to these mysteries, and think no preparation to be sufficient, must receive, that they may learn how to receive the more worthily: and they that have a less degree of reverence, must come often, to have it heightened: that as those creatures that live amongst the snows of the mountains turn white with their food and conversation with such perpetual whitenesses, so our souls may be transformed into the similitude and union with Christ, by our perpetual feeding on him, and conversation, not only in his courts, but in his very heart, and most secret affections, and incomparable purities."

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